

A group of cheerleaders are celebrating, holding up large wooden trophies. The trophies have gold plaques and figurines on top. The cheerleaders are wearing blue and white uniforms with white pom-poms. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators in a stadium.

**Back-to-Back
State Champs!**

**Vikings
Squad**

**Northwest High School
Celebrating 50 Years
Grand Island, Nebraska
Special Issue**

Back-to-Back

Vikings take advantage of new arena

Laura Springer
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

One year ago, after an incredible season, fourteen Lady Northwest Vikings stormed the court at Devaney after winning a nail-biter State Championship game in double overtime. After only losing two seniors, the chance at being back-to-back State Champs loomed in the air. "I had a lot of high expectations [going into the season] since we had a lot of starters coming back," said senior Kennadi Keezer.

The girls knew it would take lots of hard work and dedication, but they were bound and determined to do the absolute best they could without worrying about the final outcome. They worked hard in the weight room and went to numerous camps and games in the summer. The long days paid off once season started. "Going into the season I didn't really know what to expect, but after the first week of practice I knew we had a really good chance of winning districts and state," said senior Katie Placke.

The Vikings spent the first 11 days of the season practicing, and then headed off to Central City for their first game of the season. The Vikings won 67-16. Two days later the Vikings took their first loss to Norris, the same school the Vikings beat in the State Championship last year. Senior Erin Sorahan mentioned how the team felt after the game, "I hate losing, but I think it helped

us to focus on improving."

The Vikings went on to win their holiday tournament in Wayne, and by the time they stepped onto the court for the District Championship game their record had improved to 21-2 and were ranked #1 in the state. The Vikings had entered the State Tournament as a Wildcard the past two years, but they were determined to change that this year.

The Vikings won the District Championship 57-36 over Holdrege, but they still had bigger goals ahead. They went to practice the next week and worked hard for three days to prepare for the State Tournament. Even though they'd been there the past two years, the atmosphere they were to play in was different. The Pinnacle Bank Arena was recently constructed for basketball games, concerts, and much more. This meant that our own Lady Vikings were going to play basketball in the same space that Pink performed. How cool is that? Since Pinnacle is now the new basketball arena, the Devaney is no longer going to be used for State Championship games. Therefore, the Lady Vikings were the last Class B team to win a State Championship at the Devaney.

This year, after their first day and first game at Pinnacle, they became the team of "firsts" at the State Tournament. They played the very first game of the day, at 9am, in the



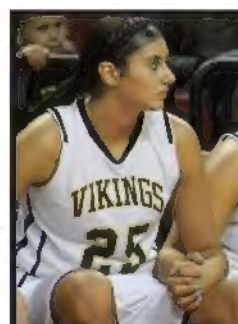
Pinnacle Bank Arena. Placke became the first high schooler to score in the Arena. Sorahan was the first to score a three-pointer in the Arena. Keezer was the first to grab an offensive rebound. Senior McKenzie Brown was the first to grab a defensive rebound. Using these statistics to their advantage, the Vikings slid past Sidney 65-44. The next day the Vikings faced rival Norris. With much vest and revenge, the Vikings went out and shut down Norris's hopes of getting to the State Championship game as they had in volleyball. The Vikings won 54-44.

The Lady Vikings

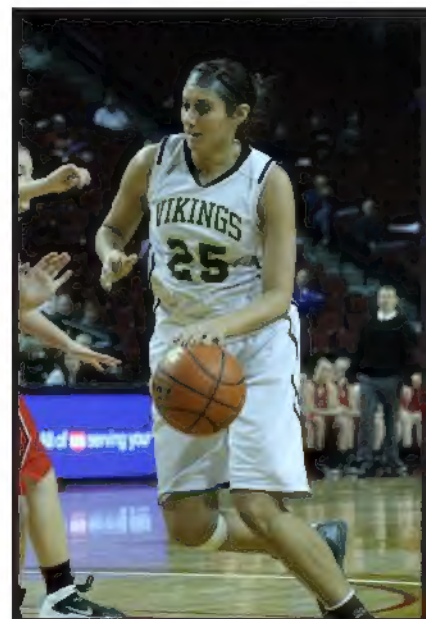
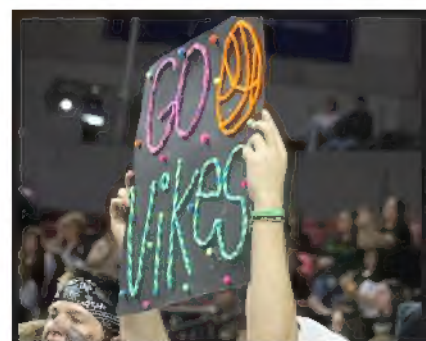
were in the State Championship for the second year in a row. The #1 Vikings were to face #2 Pius. It was battle on the court for four quarters, the point totals going back and forth between both teams, but the Vikings didn't let the pressure get to them. They played calmly and with fire. High individual stats-such as Placke's 12 rebounds and Brown's 36 points- combined with those of the other team members (especially the team's collective 83 free-throw percentage) all came together in the end. When the final buzzer sounded the Vikings ran



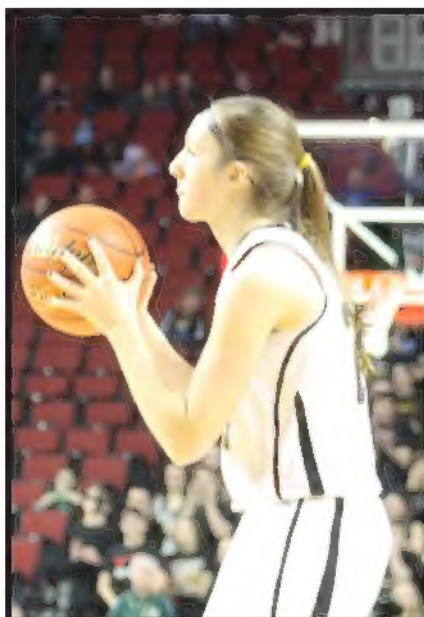
and screamed and jumped and hugged; they had defeated Pius 66-58, becoming back-to-back Class B State Champions. Keezer says it wasn't all about winning, though, "I'm never going to forget this group of amazing girls. They honestly became like my family and I will miss them."



State Champs!



Thank you to
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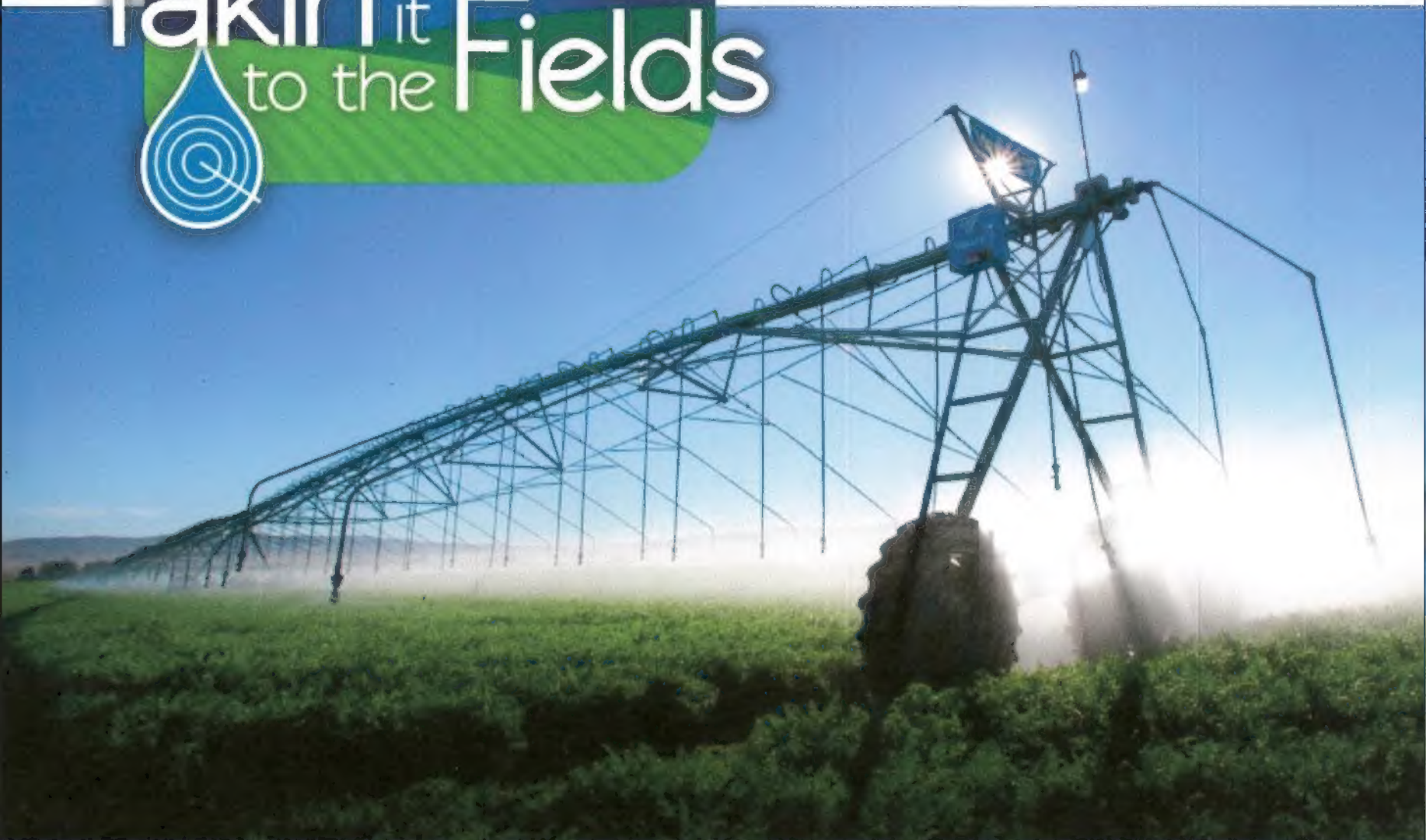


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